R8710-1

PRRC emerging trends

Published by the Princeton Religion Research Center

Vol. 8, No. 7

Sept 86

Americans Express Great Concern About Honesty of U.S. Public

PRINCETON, Amid widespread recent reports of unethical and illegal activities in many areas of public life, almost two-thirds of Americans express dissatisfaction with the honesty and standards of behavior of their compatriots.

In the latest Gallup assessment, 63% say that, on the whole, they are dissatisfied with the honesty of people in this country, while only about half that proportion, 33% are satisfied.

The current findings are similar to those recorded in the first (1963) Gallup measurement, but represent a modest improvement over the results of a Gallup Poll taken at the height of the Watergate affair in 1973. In that survey, dissatisfaction outweighed satisfaction by better than a 3-to-1 ratio, 72% to 22%.

Following is the question asked and the trend:

On the whole, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the honesty and standards of behavior of people in this country today?

Honesty & Behavior Standards

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	No opinion %
1986-Apr. 11-14	33	63	4
1973	22	72	6
1963	34	58	8

Although majorities in all major population groups express dissatisfaction with the current ethical climate in the U.S., somewhat greater concern is voiced by blacks, persons 50 and older, the less affluent and less-well educated, and people holding traditional moral values. The apparent differences by gender and religion are too small to be statistically meaningful. Details are shown in the following table:

Honesty & Behavior Standards

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	No opinion %
NATIONAL	33	63	4
Men	35	61	4
Women	30	65	5
Whites	34	62	4
Blacks	21	73	6
18-29 years	36	60	4
30-49 years	36	60	4
50 & older	26	70	4
College grads.	43	55	2
College inc.	32	64	4
High school grads.	31	64	5
Not H.S. grads.	27	68	5
Family Income:			
$25,000 & over	39	59	2
Under $25,000	29	66	5
Protestants	31	66	3
Catholics	33	62	5
Moral Values:			
Traditional	26	69	5
Moderate	37	60	3
Liberal	33	64	3

The public's current perceptions of their compatriots' honesty and behavior standards are based on in-person interviews with 1,552 adults, 18 and older, conducted in over 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period April 11-14. For results based on samples of this size one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction.

Public Holds Moderate Values On Sex, Morality and Religion

On values relating to sex, morality, family life and religion, the views of most Americans are somewhat between extremely conservative and extremely liberal, although the weight of opinion is decidedly on the conservative side.

About half of survey respondents (52%) place themselves in moderate positions on a 7-point scale designed to measure social values, while 36% take positions on the right and 11% on the left.

Respondents were handed a card and asked this question:

Some people have very traditional values about such matters as sex, morality, family life and religion. If 1 represents someone who has very traditional, old-fashioned values and 7 represents someone who has very liberal, modern values about these matters, where on this scale would you place yourself?

The survey suggests that the Democratic and Republican parties, in seeking to win votes on social issues with a strong moral content, start with about an even advantage: 38% of Republicans place themselves on the traditional side, 53% in moderate positions, and 9% on the liberal side. These figures almost exactly match those for Democrats: 40%, 51%, and 8%, respectively.

PROTESTANTS MORE LIKELY TO LEAN TO 'RIGHT'

The college educated tend to eschew either strongly liberal or strongly conservative positions, with three college graduates in five (62%) opting for moderate points on the scale. However, traditional values also outweigh liberal ones among this group, by a 27% to 11% margin. Persons whose formal education ended before high school graduation come down strongly (54% to 10%) in favor of traditonal values.

The survey also shows women, older persons and Southerners to be more traditionally oriented than their opposite numbers.

Those surveyed who indicate that their political philosophy is right of center are somewhat more inclined than others to place themselves on the traditional side of the values scale, but the overall differences on the two scales are not as pronounced as might be expected.

Protestants (41%) are considerably more likely to lean to the right on the values scale than are Catholics (29%). Little difference in this regard is found between whites and blacks, with 37% of whites and 35% of blacks placing themselves on the traditonal side of the scale.

Here are the results by major population groups:

VALUES SCALE*

	Traditional (1's,2's) %	Moderate (3's,4's,5's) %	Liberal (6's,7's) %
NATIONAL	36	52	11
Democrats	40	51	8
Republicans	38	53	9
Protestants	41	51	7
Catholics	29	56	14
Whites	37	52	10
Blacks	35	50	15
Men	31	54	14
Women	41	49	9
18–29 years	20	58	21
30–49 years	33	55	11
50 & older	52	43	4
College grads.	27	62	11
College inc.	30	58	12
High school grads.	34	53	12
Not H.S. grads.	54	35	10
Political philosophy:			
Left of center	32	53	15
Middle of road	31	58	10
Right of center	45	46	9
East	31	58	10
Midwest	33	55	11
South	45	43	11
West	34	53	13

*No opinion, 1% nationally, omitted.

The findings are based on in-person interviews with 1,552 adults 18 and older, conducted in over 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period April 11–14. For results based on samples of this size one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction.

Religious Trends In World Today

It is difficult to draw conclusions concerning religion in the world because of three major factors: (1) a lack of long-standing trends in religious surveys, (2) differing definitions of a vital religious faith, and (3) sharply differing patterns from nation to nation in religious beliefs and practices. Certain general conclusions, however, can be drawn, based on survey data (from GIRI surveys in 1974 and 1981), census data observations by social commentators, well-documented trends in the U.S. (which may foreshadow developments in Europe and elsewhere), and the response to evangelists around the world:

1. Most people in the non-Communist nations believe in God or a universal spirit, and most report being identified with some church or faith.

2. Religion is most important, and beliefs are strongest, among people in Africa (sub-Sahara), Latin America and North America, somewhat less so in the Far East, and considerably less so in Western Europe.

3. Belief in God or a universal spirit has declined in a number of nations since a 1948 Gallup survey; however, belief in God remains quite flat in other nations, including the U.S. Trends in belief in immortality have tended to parallel trends in belief in God. Here are selected trends in belief in God:

BELIEF IN GOD IN 8 NATIONS

France

1981	62%
1974	72
1968	73
1948	66

West Germany

1981	72%
1974	72
1968	81

Scandinavia

1974	65%
1968	75
1948	81

Great Britain

1981	76%
1974	76
1968	77

Canada

1985	87%
1974	89
1948	95

Italy

1981	84%
1974	88

U.S.A.

1981	95%
1974	94
1948	94

Japan

1981	39%
1974	38

4. Belief in a *personal God* (who answers prayers and judges people) – the God of Biblical revelation – has also declined, as measured in a 1974 survey conducted for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and a 1981 survey conducted for CARA and the Europeans Value Systems Study Group, perhaps even more precipitously than belief in a God in general or a universal spirit. The 1974 and 1981 questions on the *nature* of God differ too much to represent clear trends, but it would appear that belief in a personal God lost considerable ground between 1974 and 1981 in Italy, West Germany, France and in the Scandinavian countries.

When the beliefs of Americans are compared with those of residents of 13 other nations, based on the survey for CARA and the EVSSG, we find that only in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland do higher percentages than in the United States believe in a personal God. One-third or fewer believe in a personal God in the Netherlands, Great Britain, Italy, France, Finland, West Germany, Denmark and Sweden. The lowest proportions are found in Denmark and Sweden.

Religious Trends in World Today (cont'd.)

In addition, belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ among the British declined from 71% in 1957 to 52% in 1981. Comparable data are not available for the other nations.

From the point of view of evangelical Christianity, the findings for Western Europe are perhaps bleak, and suggest the enormous challenges facing evangelical churches in the year ahead: relatively low levels of belief in a personal God, many not finding comfort and support from their beliefs, fairly large numbers saying that churches are not providing help with moral and family problems or spiritual needs. In the minds of many people interviewed, Western Europe is not, or is no longer, a Christian continent. When asked if they feel that the Ten Commandments still apply to "most people," fewer than one-fourth say they do: furthermore, fewer than two-thirds say they apply either fully or to a limited extent.

How about religion in the future – will it be more important, less important, or equally important for people in your country? A combined total of 19% of Western Europeans say "more important," while 34% say "less," 36% predict little change, and another 11% do not express an opinion.

5. Lack of survey data since 1981 (except for a few nations) prevents drawing firm conclusions about developments since 1981 in terms of world religion, but the cumulative evidence suggests at least a levelling out in downtrends in religious beliefs. The Reverend David B. Barrett, an Angelican priest and compiler of *The World Christian Encyclopedia*, reports that, on the basis of census data from many nations, there is a big swing away from all forms of anti-religion and non-religious ideology. He notes that this year's figures show 79% of the world's people are religious compared to 72% in 1970, with the proportion of outright disbelievers or atheists declining from 13% to 4%.

If trends in the U.S. are any harbinger, we may see in the years ahead a rising tide of interest in religion in other parts of the world. A majority of Americans, for example, say they are more interested in religious and spiritual matters than they were five years ago.

From clearcut evidence in the U.S., and cumulative data from elsewhere, one could conclude that the two dominant trends in religion in the world today are: (1) a search for spiritual depth and (2) a search for deeper and more meaningful relationships.

(Synopsis of comments made by George Gallup, Jr. at world press briefing at AMSTERDAM '86, International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists.)

Two-Thirds Of U.S. Adults Have Attended A Catholic Service

Two-thirds of the U.S. adult population (67%) have attended a Catholic religious service once or more times during their lifetime.

The next highest proportion (54%) is recorded for the Baptist group of churches, followed by Methodist churches (50%).

Here is the question, asked of a national sample of adults in a 1984 survey conducted for the Robert H. Schuller ministries:

Have you ever been to a religious service at any of the kinds of churches listed on this card?

Here are the national findings, with total adding to more than 100% due to muliple responses:

	National %
Catholic	67
Baptist	54
Methodist	50
Lutheran	35
Presbyterian	33
Episcopalian	25
Southern Baptist	21
Charismatic or Pentecostal	15
Independent or non-demoninational	15
Evangelical	13
Mormon	8
Fundamentalist	7
Unitarian	7
Seventh-Day Adventist	6
Mennonite or Brethren	4
Other	15
None	11
No opinion	1
TOTAL	380%*

CANADIAN CHURCH ATTENDANCE DROPS TO RECORD LOW

Church attendance in Canada, on a typical May Sunday, was 31% down one percentage point from a year earlier and at the lowest level recorded in almost three decades.

Attendance today is much higher among Canadians who have reached their fiftieth birthday (46%), than among those in their thirties or forties (30%) and particularly among adults under thirty (16%).

In 1957, when this question was first asked, 60% reported attendance at church or synagogue. This proportion dropped to 44% in 1970 and to 41% in 1975. But between 1980 and 1984, there was little change, with about 36% reporting attendance.

Most of the recent decline has occurred among Roman Catholics, 40% of whom currently attend, compared with 43% a year ago, and 87% in 1957.

Attendance among Protestants, currently 28%, has remained remarkably level since 1970, but is well below the 43% attendance found in 1957.

The question:
Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

The following table shows results of this question today and in earlier years:

CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE

	National	Roman Catholic	Protestants
1986	31%	40%	28%
1985	32	43	29
1984	36	50	29
1983	36	51	27
1982	35	48	27
1981	37	51	29
1980	35	50	26
1975	41	61	25
1970	44	65	28
1965	55	83	32
1957	60	87	43

The latest findings are based on in-person interviews with 1,035 adults, 18 and older, conducted between May 1-3. For samples of this size, the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be four percentage points in either direction, 95 out of 100 times.

WEEKLY CHURCHGOING VARIES WIDELY AMONG NATIONS

The weekly churchgoing habits of Europeans and persons in other parts of the world vary greatly, ranging from 91% in Malta to 3% in Denmark and Iceland.

Here is the full list, based on surveys conducted for the European Value Systems Study Group and coordinated through the British Gallup Poll:

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE ATTENDING CHURCH ONCE A WEEK

Malta	91%
Republic of Ireland	72
Mexico	54
Northern Ireland	52
South Africa	
Whites	50
Blacks	38
USA	
National	43
Black	45
Hispanic	45
Spain	41
Italy	36
Chile	31
Belgium	30
Canada	30
Netherlands	27
Australia	22
West Germany	21
S. Korea	19
Great Britain	14
France	12
Norway	7
Hungary	5
Sweden	5
Japan	4
Finland	4
Denmark	3
Iceland	3

Who Do Americans Say That I Am?

By George Gallup, Jr. and George O'Connell

In this intriguing investigation the authors look at the religious values of American Christians. Drawing upon survey material collected for the Schuller organization and other groups, they go beyond mere head counting. Their goal is to ascertain how Americans perceive Jesus Christ in order to understand the impact He has on their lives.

Questions vitally important to the churches were asked. Among them:

- What impact has Jesus as a moral and ethical teacher had on your life?
- Where does religion fit into your value system?
- How can the churches better serve you?
- What do you consider to be the most appealing character traits of Jesus?
- How hard have you tried to follow the example of Jesus?
- How close do you think you come in following the example of Jesus?

Interviews with representative Americans bring the data down to earth. Additionally, church leaders from various denominations offer suggestions for infusing new life into the churches.

As Robert H. Schuller writes in an Afterword, "The polls and other evidence suggest that many Americans are not being served adequately by their churches even as surveys suggest that the interest in spiritual values has increased." This book contains "possibilities and insights that will benefit the Christian community."

This intriguing investigation of religious values offers significant and timely information for church officials, pastors, and educators – anyone concerned with increasing the effectiveness of church ministry. Paper, $10.95.

Available at your local bookstore or direct from the publisher (please include $1.00 per book for postage and handling): THE WESTMINSTER PRESS, 925 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

EMERGING TRENDS is published monthly except July and August by the PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER. The Center, founded in 1977, is an inter-faith non-denominational research organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC specializes in creative, actionable research, utilizing the worldwide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International. The purpose of the PRRC is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the U.S. and abroad and to explore ways this information can enable religious leaders to promote spiritual growth. A one year subscription can be obtained for $30.00; inquire: **Publications Department, P.O. Box 310, 53 Bank Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542 (Telephone 609/924-9600). PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGE.**

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